

LETTER FROM St. OMER To a FRIEND in LONDON.

When first imparted to you my design to travel, you desired (which was to me a Command) to take some observation of the deportment of the *Roman Catholics* abroad, in Relation to the *English Affairs* about the late Plot, and though it's impossible to have that account of things of this nature, as you might have from a Person under other Circumstances, (being never out of my native Country before) yet, in compliance with your request, I have sent you what occurred to my observation in that little Society I had with those sort of men, and this being to remind a place for correspondence with the *English Catholics*, I thought it might most effectually answer your expectation, to spend sometime in it, for here the whole time (almost) of the Priests is taken up in receiving and sending dispatches to *England, Ireland, and Scotland*, so that wherever the Plot was Coin'd, we may rationally conclude here it was Mill'd.

Upon my arrival here, I delivered your Letter commendatory to your Friend, whom I found very ready in a kind Reception, to afford me a share in the Company he kept with the Fathers, and others of Eminency, by which in the General, I was informed, that the late discovered Plot for the killing of the King and Subversion of the *English Government* charged upon them, was so far from being the Invention of the Witnesses, (as some have given out) that it was the politick Result of grand Councils, influenc'd principally by those of the Jesuitical Order, who as the *Papists* say, are the only Men for projects in *Europe*, which assertion seems to be confirm'd by some Instructions, one of that Faction gave to some *Pious Catholics*, lately, deputed from this Place to *England* upon the *Catholic Service*, a Copy of which, by the Assistance of a Friend, came to my hands, the substance of which (transcribed for your information) follows.

The Father took for his Theme *Genes. 18.* verse the 19, from whence, the Doctrine of equivocation is peremptorily asserted to be according to holy Scripture, and that when a Person's Interest, and the Churches interest stand in Competition, that then it is lawful by the assistance of this Doctrine, to assert the Churches honor in publick, though it be circumstanced with the highest suspicion of our own sincerity, and this was an undoubted article of the *Catholic Faith*, which upon pain of damnation, they ought to submit to.

And to prevent any scruple, that might arise about the receiving of this Doctrine, the example of the holy Patriarch *Jacob* was urged by the Father, which he desired they would set before them, and conform to as often as occasion required, which he told them would be of great use in the work they was to engage in, for the propagating of the Faith of the *Roman Church* in *England*, and that it might be safely made use of, without any hazard to their

*Son*s, even at the hour of *Death*, when the confessing of the *truth*, would be of great detriment to the *Catholick Cause*, upon a steadfast belief of which, the souls of those *Catholicks*, that died upon the score of the Plot was supported, and made their souls invincible under all the *heretical solicitations*, for the discovering the secrets of *Holy Church*. It's impossible to perfect our designs, but under the shelter of this Doctrine, no annihilating of this pestilent *heresy* without a firm belief, and an undividable assent to it; therefore, all the successes that the Churches interest has met withal in *England*, since the carriage of that great project, to be attributed to this, had those of the *Ignatian* order owned their guiltiness, and that the charge against them was consonant to *truth*, what a *Loss* had the Church sustained by such a cowardly *deportment*, nay so obliging is this upon us, that we don't only secure the Churches credit by it, and upon that account, it's a debt we all owe her, but we merit *Salvation*, likewise together with the obtention of a *Crown of Martyrdom*, to be ranked among all those noble *Confessors* in the sacred *Kalendar*, where our names shall be perfumed with a perpetual esteem, and have the honor of being supplicated by the *Church Militant*, yea those exquisite Flames of *Purgatory*, wherein the Patriarchs before the *Advent* of *Christ* lay, so long for a *Purgation*, are by a serviceable mental *Reservation* for the advantage of the Church, excused from undergoing: There is no point to necessary in the present juncture as this, nor none so seasonable to be pressed upon, you that have taken the holy vow of *mission*, and are appointed to go for *England*, where you will find it very serviceable in your *Assistance*, for the discharging those important Affairs, that will be committed to your *conduct*, the due consideration whereof, impressed upon your minds, will minister your souls for action, and to wade through the difficulties that may be met with.

The *Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy*, those bitter Pills are easily swallowed, when guided with a Mental *Reservation*, by the help of which, they may be taken by the Devoutest *Catholicks*, without which, they would be nauseous to the Palate: No true *Catholick* being able to take them in their literal signification, by this *Heretical Assemblies* may be frequented, and their *Sacramental Administrations* joined withal, when it may conduce to the interest of the Church, which otherwise would be impracticable, by this you may take up the *Cudgels of Episcopacy* against *Dissenters*, and when you see it necessary, those of the *Dissenters* against *Episcopacy*, and yet at the same time seek the subversion of both, which leads to the main thing I have in Commission, & that is, to give you some particular Instructions about your *Deportment in England*, in the present conjuncture of things, as I received them from a solemn *Council of the Fathers*.

You must upon all occasions decry, that which the *Hereticks* call the *Popish Plot*, which was no other but a holy *Combination* to propagate the *Catholick Faith*, and to extirpate that *British heresy*, the accomplishment whereof, much honor would not only redound to God, but much emolument to the Church, which should inspire the Soul of every true *Catholick* to engage in it, and to call nothing by the name of hardship, that tends to the effecting thereof, but yet secrecy is essentially necessary, and the denial of any such thing of absolute use, among those *Heretical People*, who amidst of all the clear discoveries, they boast of want, the dying Testimony of those Charged, to have been the Instruments in this *Sacred* undertaking, who to their eternal honor, be it spoken, preferred the Interest of our holy Mother, even before their own *Salvation*, and were it possible, would have been content to have had the *Infernal Punishments* inflicted upon them, rather than to have been guilty of Revealing those *Secrets*, the Church have enjoyed a concealment of those pious examples, are proposed for your *Imitation*, that you should follow their steps; its no small confidence the Church reposes in you, in sending you of this Blessed Errand, and having these secrets imparted to you, oh betray not your trust, remember you have sworn secrecy in the receipt of the holy *Eucharist*, and now to divulge those secrets you are intrusted withal, indispensably concludes under a state of *Damnation*, you are sent upon the great Affairs of the Church, and one principal duty incumbent upon you is, to insinuate among the *Hereticks*, that there was no design against them, by the *Catholicks*; you will meet with abundance of credulous Souls among them, that will believe you, and so the work will be the less difficult: Former *Success* pleads for farther *Attempts*, a persuasion the discover'd design was but a fiction, makes a future the more feasible, when we are pitted as sufferers for our *Innocence*, we cannot easily be thought *Conspirators*. You will find those good natured Souls, even amongst the *Hereticks* themselves, that will joyn in the Comfort in crying out no Plot, no Plot except it be a *Presbyterian* one, (which opinion we shall suddenly take care to confirm), and that it was the indigency of the Witnesses, that invented all this Bustle about a *Popish Plot*, these are a sort of Men, that are in their kind serviceable to

our Interest, although they don't design it so; that care must be taken to nourish this Notion among them; and not to despise this day of small things.

In all your publick Discourses, Usher in something about the Procedures of the Parliament, and Represent them as odious as possible you can, to lessen their Esteem amongst the People; let 41 and 42 bear a great Part in your Discourse, and give out that their present Propensions are to repeat those Practices, devote your selves to compose Pamphlets, against those pestilent sort of Men; Roger Lestranges elaborate Pieces will furnish you with Sentences to sute your purpose, scatter Reports, that most of the House of Commons in the late Parliaments were *Puriticks*; and that their Votes were highly arbitrary, and illegal, and that their *Pharisaical* Principles was apparent by making War upon the conforming Clergy, in their ordering a Bill to be brought in against Pluralities, which must be represented as the *Præsumptuous* to *Hudibras* Cry: no Bishopry this you will secure the superior Clergy, on your side, especially those of London, most of which keep their Country Livings, as the Citizens their Houses; but above all, admire at their Presumption about the Bill of Exclusion, and that their intermeddling with a thing of this Nature, implies a great Heighth of Sedition, and Faction in their Body, that every Member that voted in favor of it, needed a Pardon stamp'd by Creation, as much as my Lord *Danby*. That it was more proper for them to consult the best way, to make *Tangier* tenable, and the raising of Money for the Rebuilding of *Charles* and *Harris* Forts: This is a work also of indispensable necessity, they being the great *Bull-work* against our Designs, which must by means be battered down, before we can make any considerable Progress in those various Works, that now are under our Management.

This hath likewise been the continual Employment of *Catholicks* in that Kingdom, with no small Success, so that some Sort of People question whether there be any such Constitution in the Government, and others to wish there were not.

You must also mightily inveigh against the *Dissenters* from the established Church among them, and lament the Negligence of Subordinate Magistrates, in not putting the Laws in Execution against these Sort of People, commend those Clergy Men most, whose zeal leads them that way, oppose the Union of different Opinions, as a thing unattainable; and that it proceeds from a spirit of faction to design it, that it will be the way to ruin the conforming Party, cry out of dangers, impendant from the *Presbyterians* against the Government; This must be effectually done, for it is from those Sort of Men, that poor *Guibet* have of late suffered most extremely, they being most of wallerising Spirits, by this, you will strangely amuse and divert the *Hornet* hot pursuits against the *Catholicks*, whilst they are in their full Cry, against one another, our Designs may go on the more smoothly, and unopposedly, and the Laws against us lie down on, for *Designs* cannot be so well managed in a *Prison*, this hath likewise been experienced, to have been mighty successful since the Discovery of that glorious Project. In a word make it your Business to expose all, as infamous Persons, and Enemies to the King, and Kingdom, that oppose the Interest of the *Catholick* Cause, more especially the petitioning Lords of the Monmouth faction, who shall in due time have that Retribution for their Pain, as will make them Repent of being such great *Strickers* for *Protestantism*.

I thought Sir, to transcribe this Paper for your information, that you might see how innocent these Men are, as to a Plot, and what well wishers they are to the present Constitution, as a traiterous Poet lately professed upon the Scaffold, and how infinitely they are wrong'd, that upon the Evidence of such Persons, their Lives should be taken away, when their endeavors are not to justify their pretended Innocence, but to conceal their devilish Guilt, and to facilitate the perpetration of their hellish Designs against the *Protestant* Interest, nothing being more common than when their Company corresponds to justify their *Conspiracies*, against the *English* Government, and yet in *Protestant* Countries pretend to abhor any such Proceedings, as much as Sir *Francis Withins* does petitioning.

The Priests here was strangely exhillerated at the Receipt of the Lord *Stafford*'s Speech, to find that he finished his testimony with a *Lye* in his mouth, for they looked upon his Lordship as staggering in his belief, as to the Doctrine of equivocation, and had a mind to outlive Treason as well as B----- but being constant to the death, hath obtained with the Rest to be privately Laughed, by the subtle Priests, to suffer himself to be so imposed upon; when as they are not afraid to whisper, that he knew himself guilty, and it was pleasantly expressed by a *Papist*, that his Lordship Rode to heaven upon a *Jesuits* back.

The Priests of late are mightily transported at their *English* Intelligence, and say it will shortly appear to the world, that the Popish Plot was no other but a Republican, and *Presbyterian* Design, for all the Gentry in England are accounted as *Presbyterians*, that are vigorous against the Papal interest, and they openly Report that things shall be reduced to those circumstances

circumstances before it be long, that those which will talk of a Popish-Plot, must do it in their Closets, and that a grave was making in England, wherein the Protestants themselves should be forced to bury it; what these things mean, is obvious to every ones understanding, which God of his infinite mercy prevent.

You cannot, Sir, imagine with what inveteracy of Spirit they mention the English Nation; and that the Crown hath been usurped by all Protestant Kings, since the Marian days, and that they are therefore in Conscience obliged to endeavour to recover what the Church hath lost by that means; and this they will by all means call Treason, nor allow to be unjustifiable; to which degree of confidence, I am informed, they are almost arrived in England; there you have them in pretence, siding with the motions of the Court, in opposition to those of the Parliament, though implacable enemies to both; likewise in appearance joining with the Conformists against the Nonconformists, though equally (by them) are hated; for here they are manifest; and the men appear as they are; nothing being more frequent, then to hear them mention his Sacred Majesty, with an irreverence not to be pardoned; with such villifying Expressions, that would amount to the highest affront, if given to an ordinary Person.

So Sir, that which naturally Results from the whole is this, that the great Design of these sort of men, is to Ruin that Kingdom, and to divide in order to the effecting thereof, as a Roman Catholic once told me in Brussels, it was worth twenty years purchase, after the annuity of St. Pauls Deanery, to find that good Dean leave off his heats against Popery in such a Juncture as this, and worry and tare his own *Intimacy*, till he made it cry out, that Separation was both mischievous and unreasonable, thereby surprising the poor Dissenters who had a great affection for him, to find the good Doctor loose the Scent of Popery, in the midst of the Plot, and fall upon them.

Sir, this little account of the Disposition and temper of these Persons, we may see the absolute Necessity for Protestants to live in the purest Exercise of Love and good Affection, tho they may dissent in some particular Particulars in Judgement, in reference to render them the more capable to withstand the common Enemy of both their civil and religious Privileges; why should two or three Ceremonies be the occasion of raising Fetters, and animosities between them; certainly Men are extremely to blame, that think they owe not the Debt of common Love to one another, where these small Differences are found between them; there being no original Cause in the things themselves, to produce a dividedness of affection; therefore it must be attributed not to the Religion of the Protestants Profession (although considered in these different ways of worship now in England, that there is now a spirit of love and kindness, as there ought to be, which is so absolutely requisite under their present Circumstances), but to the ill Tempers and Passions of Men; the evil Tendency of which, is the more apprehended, in having this Prospect of the English Affairs in these Popish Counties.

Thus Sir, I have given you this small Account of Matters, as a Testimony of my Obedience, I shall still have a Sense of my Duty, in imparting any thing else of importance, that may occur in this or of any other Nature.

I am Sir your most obedient Servant.
St. Omers, June 11. 1681.
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